



emerson
theatre
company

Emerson Theatre Company
130 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02116

William L. Sharp, Department Chairman

A. D. Sensenbach, Director of Graduate Studies

Al Corona, Acting

Gus Johnson, Acting

Shirley Nemetz, Acting

Naomi Thornton, Acting

Steven Wangh, Acting

Suzanne Baxtresser, Movement

Michael Anania, Scenic Design

Ann Layman Chancellor, Costume Design

Mary Thomasine Harkins, Costume Design

George Holley, Technical Director

Joseph Cacaci, Publicity

Tobie S. Stein, Box Office-House Manager

Margaret Robinson, Box Office-House Manager

Yolanda Yrisarry, Secretary to the Department

The Beggar's Opera

by John Gay

vocal settings and incidental music

by Frederic Austin (revised edition, 1920)

with additional settings by Stephen B. Wilson

Directed by Dr. William L. Sharp

Assistant Director Joe Cacaci

Music Director Stephen B. Wilson

Set Designer Michael Anania

Costume Designer Mary Harkins

Lighting Designer Stephen Gambino

Technical Director George Holley

Stage Manager Maureen Fenwick

The Beggar's Opera

History has proven the incredible longevity of that English theatrical phenomenon known as The Beggar's Opera. One of the most remarkable instantaneous successes in the history of art, it has proven itself as endearing and as timely in its "message" to twentieth- as to eighteenth-century audiences. The incisive satire of John Gay's libretto finds equally vulnerable targets in our time as in its author's.

The music, however, has fared less well with the passage of time since opening night on January 29, 1728. Originally, a large part of the score's satirical comment depended upon the listener's awareness of the context of the original tunes which Gay, not a composer himself, borrowed as "settings" for his own poetry. Many of the score's songs were drawn from the well-known repertory of the ale-house, the back streets of London, the dance hall, folk songs, and ballads. It certainly must have been amusing, or perhaps even shocking, to hear a tender love song sung to a tune which originally accompanied a bawdy text (e.g. "My Heart Was So Free"), or to see the well-known English tune "Greensleeves" transformed into a bitter, cynical curse by the about-to-be-hanged tragic hero. We in the twentieth century have irrevocably lost that extra measure of meaning which Gay unquestionably meant to extend to his contemporary listener through this intentional juxtaposition.

To be sure, the music--most of it, at least--certainly is tuneful. Not only was the plebian music of the 1720's used for the score: Gay also drew upon art music from such eminent composers as his friend and contemporary George Frederick Handel (both he and Gay were born in 1685, as was Bach.), Henry Purcell, Solomon Eccles, Henry Carey, and Giovanni Bononcini. One of Gay's primary targets seems to have been Italian opera, which at this time was replete with dramatic absurdities and musical excesses in a country whose audience was rapidly tiring of art it could not understand. The Beggar and the Player touch upon the subject in the very first and very last scenes. The entire score, however, deals severely (though good-naturedly, because Gay and Handel, the leading exponent of Italian opera in England at the time, were close friends) with such conventional operatic devices as the musical duet between the two heroines (Polly's and Lucy's duets "I'm Bubbled" and "Why How Now Madame Flirt?"), the constant use of simile ("The Turtle Thus," "I, Like the Fox", "I'm Like a Skiff", "A Maid is like the Goldon Ore", etc.), the tragic action but comic ending, and the final scene and chorus involving the entire company, to name a few.

The original production must have seemed interminable by our standards, since there were sixty-nine musical numbers; the present production uses roughly half that number. Included in these performances, however, are several instrumental interludes which were not part of the original score, but were composed in 1920 by the English composer and arranger Frederic Austin. The entire overture, originally composed by one Dr. Johann Pepusch, is abridged here, as we present, for reasons of economy dictated by the context, only the first (grave) section.

--S.B.W.

THE CAST (in alphabetical order)

Tatiana Albrecht.....	Mrs. Coaxer
Patricia Barker.....	Mrs. Peachum
Elizabeth Briggs.....	Jenny Diver
Stephen De Francesco.....	Jemmy
Paul Fagen.....	Mr. Peachum
Bill Gonzalez.....	Ben
Scott Hayes.....	Beggar
Jeff Kirshner.....	Crook
Gus Piccone.....	Captain Macheath
David Regal.....	Mr. Lockit
Michael Rini.....	Filch
Andrea Sragg.....	Lucy Lockit
Cynthia Stavola.....	Betty Doxy
Cornelia Stryker.....	Mrs. Trapes
Linda Spitzberg.....	Molly Brazen
Syndi Zook.....	Polly Peachum

The play is set in London, England in 1728

There will be one ten-minute intermission

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager: Maureen Fenwick

Accompanist: Dan Gorgoglione

Master Carpenter: Lee Dunholter

Master Electrician: Bob Prince

Assistant Electricians: Jean Scannell, Deana Baron

Stage Carpenter: Guy Gonzalez

Stage Crew Head: Guy Gonzalez

Stage Crew: Sherm Shaver, Karen DeCotis

Property Master: Paula Gouras

Property Crew: Jane Elliot, Shahn Reinker

Electricians: Nina Jones, Ann Howell, Michael Malkoff,
Ellen Luning

Set Construction Crew: Dave Breen, Barbara Burten,
George Camarda, Stephen De Francesco,
Madeline Dubroff, Guy Gonzalez, Paula Gouras,
Nina Jones, Linda Kelleher, Fred Lein,
Cindy Michelson, Mark Overton,
Greg Palmer, Gary Patric, Wendy Rogers,
Sue Sanders, Beth Van Court, Steve Wright

Costumier: Catherine Szari

Costume Design Assistant: Debra Ann Jankowski

Accessories: Carla Froeberg

Make-Up: Bobbi Brown

Costume Construction: Mary Carey, Meg Coe,
Paul Dini, Suzy Donahue,
Rhoda Gibson, Judi Holmes,
Lloyd Johnson, Stephen Klekota,
Laura La Fontaine, Jean Lenville,
Leslie Malton, Leslie Rickert,
Cathi Schuler, Karen Simms,
Cheryl Spinacci, Suzanne Steinberg,
Laura Elena Surillo, Liz Temkin

Box Office/Publicity: Stephen De Francesco, Jeff Kirshner,
Margaret Robinson, Tobie Stein,
Sharon Sullivan, Bonnie Thorpe-Murphy,
Doreen Vaillette

Emerson Theatre Company
1976-1977 Season

Hot L Baltimore-Lanford Wilson
November 10-14, 17-21

Beggars Opera-John Gay
March 16-20, 23-27

To Be Announced
April 27-May 1, May 4-8

Tigers-Loft Production-Directed by Ronald C. Fink
October 21-23

Loft Production-December 2-4

Loft Production-April 30-May 1, 2

Loft Production-May 12, 13, 14



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